

## University of Groningen

### Gadamer and the end of art

Evink, C.E.

*Published in:*  
Hermeneutics and the Humanities

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*  
2012

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Evink, C. E. (2012). Gadamer and the end of art. In M. Kasten, H. Paul, & R. Sneller (Eds.), *Hermeneutics and the Humanities: Dialogues with Hans-Georg Gadamer* (pp. 239-250). University Press.

#### Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

#### Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

*Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.*

- 39 Bernet 791.  
 40 Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'On the Divine in Early Greek Thought,' in  
 Gadamer, *Hermeneutics, Religion, and Ethics*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer  
 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 37.  
 41 TM, 148.  
 42 I would be remiss not to acknowledge, at this juncture, Gadamer's  
 reserve on the possibility of literary translation, especially of the lyric  
 kind. Space does not allow me to argue how the original work could be  
 granted recognition in literary translation. Suffice it to point out that in  
 Gadamer's view my translation of the poem would be 'a re-creation of the  
 text guided by the way the translator understands what it says' (TM, 386).  
 43 Pindar, 'Olympian 10,' in *Pindar's Odes*, trans. Roy Arthur Swanson  
 (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974), 232-4.  
 44 TM, 281.  
 45 In the Maltese original, 'Zirkonju' and 'Jonju' constitute a feminine  
 rhyme.  
 46 Gianni Vattimo, *Art's Claim to Truth*, trans. Luca D'Isanto, ed. Santiago  
 Zabala (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 145.

## 13 Gadamer and the End of Art

EDDO EVINK

*'Es ist die Aufgabe der Philosophie, das Gemeinsame auch unter dem  
 Differenten zu finden.'*

[It is the task of philosophy to find the common, also in  
 difference.]<sup>1</sup>

This clear statement of Hans-Georg Gadamer might be taken as a guiding line for reading his work. Gadamer would also be the first, however, to emphasize that this task is an infinite one. Moreover, this task seems to be not only infinite but also hopeless when it comes to an area to which Gadamer devoted much attention: the domain of art. Is there something common in everything that is usually taken to be 'art'? What do ancient tragedies, Gregorian music, Romantic literature, cubist paintings and contemporary videos and performances have in common, that makes it possible to take them together within this so-called domain of art? Both systematically (architecture, music, performances) and historically (the caves of Lascaux, Pompeii frescos, Rafael, Malevich and graffiti) the unity of the domain(s) of art is hard to define. Today the majority of contemporary philosophers and theorists of art share the opinion that it is very hard if not impossible to declare what exactly art is. The field of works that are considered as works of art is too fragmented and too hard to demarcate to allow conceptual unity. Since around 1980 this question is discussed under the heading of the theme 'The End of Art'.

In this article I will first discuss briefly what is at stake in several efforts to proclaim the so-called end of art, or the end of art history. Then I will take a closer look to two texts of Hans-Georg Gadamer in which he states that there is a unity in art and that it is the task of philosophy to find this unity: *Die Aktualität des Schönen*, a small book that was published in 1977, and the article 'Das Ende der Kunst?' from 1985. In the end, I will evaluate Gadamer's efforts to maintain the unity of art, and I will propose a different approach, with the help of another text by Gadamer, 'Begriffsgeschichte als Philosophie'.

The theme of 'The End of Art' hides in fact several different explanations of the state of the arts at the end of the twentieth century. They all have in common that they, paradoxically, do not really discuss the end of art, but the end of a history of art. Many philosophers and art theorists have reflected on this issue, of whom I shall mention here only a few.

On the fifteenth of February 1979, the French-Canadian artist and philosopher Hervé Fischer proclaimed the end of art history in a performance in the Centre Pompidou in Paris. In one of the rooms of this museum he had stretched a white cord between two walls. He slowly walked along the cord, while uttering a cryptic text about *avant-garde* art, which was typified as an 'asthmatic chronology'. Then, in the middle of the room, he cut the cord with a knife and officially declared the history of art to be ended. Two years later, in 1981, he clarified his ideas on the end of art history in the essay *L'histoire de l'art est terminée*. His main aim was to liberate art from the ivory tower that the *avant-garde* had built for it, to give art back to society and to make it free accessible for everyone. Therefore art should not receive its meaning exclusively from the illusions of progress within its own art history, but from the many functions it has within society.<sup>2</sup>

Arthur Danto has become famous by writing several texts since the early 1980s, in which he coined the expression 'The End of Art'. Andy Warhol's Brillo Boxes made Danto ask what it is that defines art. His answer is that art is determined by its place in history: works of art react on earlier works of art, as well as on the social and cultural situation in which they are created. According to Danto the history of art is characterised by the attempt to look for progress – the criteria of representation and expression do not work anymore. Danto says that in modern art it is the story or theory accompanying the material art work that defines its essence: an art work is a work of art if the artist can give a philosophical and conceptual justification of his work. During the period of the twentieth century *avant-garde*, such a theory usually related art work to its place in art history. According to Danto, renewal, innovation, had become a goal in itself. At a certain moment in the twentieth century, he writes, artists were no longer interested in making new art works, but wanted to create new currents, new directions in art history – the 'isms' were stumbling over each other, always in search of the newest hype. The Brillo Boxes showed Danto that this is what distinguishes art from other products. This is a fortiori the case

for 'ready-mades': it is the theory that changes anything into a work of art. The Brillo Boxes, however, at the same time demonstrated the end of this historical identity of art. Since this work of art could not easily be distinguished from real boxes containing soap, the result was that everything could be art – and therefore it is no longer clear what art is. Also the criterion of renewal does not work anymore, because nothing really new can be made any longer. In short, according to Danto, art has found its end by changing into its own theoretical justification, i.e. in philosophy – the parallel with Hegel is clear and is explicitly made by Danto.<sup>3</sup>

As is the case with Hegel's announcement of the end of art, this does not mean that there will be no art anymore; it means that art can no longer derive its meaning from art history. In fact, 'The End of Art' means the end of art history. Since it was this history that provided art clear what art is, what the word 'art' stands for.

In the same period, the early 1980s, art historian Hans Belting profoundly questioned the idea of a unity in art history. In his view, this unity has fallen apart, partially because of radical new developments like the rise of modern media, but, more important, the whole idea of progress has ceased to be compelling. During the twentieth century historical progress was the framework within which art and its history could be understood, within which modern art could conceive itself and within which it could conceive pre-modern art as its historical predecessor. In other words, the history of art is a modern invention. In the second half of the last century art itself has broken through this historical framework.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, literary theorist Eva Geulen has made a profound analysis of what she calls 'the rumour of the end of art', a discourse that has accompanied modern art from the start of its journey. Following this rumour from Hegel through Heidegger, she shows how modern art has understood itself within a linear historical model, thereby announcing its end from the beginning. The end of art, therefore, is not really something new, but has always been constructive to the self-understanding of modern art.<sup>5</sup>

## 2 Gadamer on the Unity of Art

In his numerous texts on art and art history Gadamer has addressed the problem of the unity of art.

important text in this regard is *Die Aktualität des Schönen*, published in 1977, just a few years before the above mentioned views were brought to the fore.<sup>6</sup> A strange feature of this small book is the fact that already in the introduction its subject changes several times. The definition of the problem is developed in such a way that the conclusions cannot really answer the question with which the book opens.

Gadamer starts with the question how contemporary art can be justified ('Die Frage der Rechtfertigung der Kunst'). This question is as old as art itself, but has gained importance and urgency, since during the nineteenth century the self-evident integration and coherence of a Christian culture, of church and society, has faded away. In Gadamer's view, this was already announced in Hegel's idea of the *Vergangenheitscharakter* of the arts, the idea that the arts always already belong to the past. I will come back to this idea later, in the discussion of another text of Gadamer.

The question of art's justification has gained prominence since, the nineteenth century on, when art begins to develop its own independent cultural sphere, and co-operates in the creation of a pluralistic culture, in part taking over the religious function of Christian faith. In addition, an important characteristic of modern art is that it distances itself from its own tradition and culture in an increasingly provocative way.<sup>7</sup> Gadamer mentions several examples to illustrate how modern art during the twentieth century has alienated itself from its tradition as well as from its public: modern music with its dissonance, painting that leaves the Renaissance notion of the perspective behind, hermetic poetry and innovative architecture.

This brings Gadamer to another question: what is art today? He starts answering this question with a clear statement that will be his point of departure for the whole essay: The highest principle ('der oberste Grundsatz') that has to guide the philosophical reflection on the question 'what is art?' is that traditional art and modern art have to be taken together: 'Eine erste Voraussetzung ist dass beides als Kunst verstanden werden muss und dass beides zusammengehört.'<sup>8</sup> A few pages further he states again that this is the task of philosophy. With reference to Plato he writes: 'Es ist die Aufgabe der Philosophie, das Gemeinsame auch unter dem Differenten zu finden. [It is the task of philosophy to find the common, also in difference].'<sup>9</sup>

In order to maintain this unity of traditional and modern art, Gadamer's question has to be re-articulated again: how can we bridge the gap between traditional and modern art? Gadamer finds an orientation for

his answer in language. We should not underestimate, he writes, what the words that we use, can tell us. In words reside the thoughts that are given to us by tradition, and by which we can start our own thinking.<sup>10</sup> Gadamer reflects on the words 'art', 'beauty' and 'aesthetics'; in their meaning he seeks general characteristics of both traditional and modern art.

Art, as is well known, is a very recent term, invented in the eighteenth century, having its roots in the Greek *techné*, the Roman *artes*, the medieval *artes liberales*, and in the modern 'fine arts' or 'schöne Künste'. According to Gadamer, they all refer back to the Greek idea of *noetike episteme*: the creation of a product that is meant for shared use and communication, and whose core resides in mimesis, in the imitation of general features of reality and of human life. In the idea of beauty Gadamer recognizes the effort to bridge the gap between the ideas and ideals of morality and truth on the one hand, and reality on the other hand. Aesthetics is looking for truth in the unique and singular; Kant's idea of *Einbildungskraft* plays an important role here, as in Gadamer's view of the notions of free creation by a genius and free interpretation by the public.<sup>11</sup>

These last notions clarify, at least partially, the gap between traditional and modern art, that shows up in the nineteenth century. Gadamer explains how traditional art was not always meant to be art, but had other functions: nevertheless today it can clearly be recognized as art; modern art, on the other hand, is deliberately meant to be art, but its free imagination results in products that are sometimes hard to be recognized as artworks. Despite the rich insights Gadamer can give in this historical-semantic survey, they do not deliver what is supposed to be common in traditional and modern art. Therefore, at the end of the long introduction of *Die Aktualität des Schönen*, Gadamer feels the need to reach further back to general anthropological notions that should provide an anthropological basis for our experience of art:

But can we solve our problem in this way, the problem of unity between the classical tradition of art and modern art? ... But how can we help ourselves with regard to these experimental uses of art of our times, with the means of classical aesthetics? Therefore we, apparently, need to go back to more fundamental human experiences. What is the anthropological basis of our experience of art?<sup>12</sup>

However, at this point he changes his question and the entire subject of the essay: the question of the unity of art has changed into a question regarding the anthropological basis of our experience of art. I will come back to this change later.

The anthropological basis, as is well known, is sought by Gadamer in the three notions of play, symbol and feast. I will not discuss them here, but go straight away to Gadamer's conclusions. These conclusions focus on one theme, i.e. time. Other features seem to be left behind here: the dialogical character of the interpretation of art, that is discussed under the heading of the notion of play; the finiteness and irreplacibility of the art work that is contained in the notion of symbol; the communal-ity that comes to the fore in the idea of feast — all this is pushed to the background by the emphasis on time. 'Play' is now related to the contemporaneity of past and present that shows us the finitude of human experience and human existence; 'symbol' is connected with translation as a renewing interpretation of tradition; and 'feast' shows the time of hermeneutical identity. His main conclusion is that the separation of traditional *Bildung* and progressive revolutionary art is only seemingly a crevice, since they can only be understood as interdependent in their relation to tradition and time.<sup>13</sup> Finally Gadamer concludes that art, yesterday's and today's art, is what can give a lasting form to that in the stream of our experiences, what was not yet sorted out.<sup>14</sup>

In 1985, a few years after the discussion of 'The End of Art' had been unleashed, Gadamer writes a short article on the topic, with the title 'Ende der Kunst?'. The quotation mark is telling; Gadamer does not easily give in to the idea that the unity in art history might be broken forever. As the subtitle shows, 'Von Hegels Lehre vom Vergangenhitscharakter der Kunst bis zur Anti-Kunst von heute'<sup>15</sup>, he gives, just like in *Die Aktualität des Schönen*, much attention to Hegel's idea of the *Vergangenheitscharakter* of the arts, their essentially belonging to the past, and also to the view that art is the sensory appearance of ideas, das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee. In his reading, Gadamer shifts the notion of *Vergangenheitscharakter* beyond the meaning Hegel wanted to use it for. The courage of Hegel, 'dieser tapfere Schwabe'<sup>16</sup>, to survey history as a whole, and thus proclaiming its end, is part of an era of revolutions, of which, according to Gadamer, 'the end is not in sight'.<sup>17</sup>

Gadamer surprisingly combines several ideas within this one term *Vergangenheitscharakter*. According to Hegel, art is a material expression of a universal idea, das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee, thus there is truth in art. In Christian culture this truth, as it is expressed in art, is

already overtaken by religion and philosophy; they find a better expression of the ideas than art will ever be able to give. Consequently, art belongs essentially to the past, it is the past in the present, 'der Gegenwart der Vergangenheit'.<sup>18</sup> Now that art is overshadowed by religion and philosophy, it is in need of justification, because it is not divine by itself, but refers, successful or not, to the divine. In Romanticism, however, art starts to understand itself as art, creating something new, and having a significance of its own. This implies, at least this seems to be Gadamer's conclusion, that the arts have gained their own independent sphere in society — usually this is conceived as the autonomy of art, but Gadamer hardly mentions this, and suggests that this autonomy can already be found in Hegel's idea of the *Vergangenheitscharakter* of the arts. I wonder whether or in how far this last claim can be defended. It seems to me that Gadamer tries to unite two contradictory aspects of pre-modern and modern art within this one notion of Hegel: on the one hand, art as overruled by religion and philosophy, while on the other hand, it breaks out of the confines of Christian culture, which is not self-evident anymore.

Quite astonishingly, Gadamer ends his article with the remark that there will be no real end of art, because as long as people live and express themselves, there will be art, and thus every ending is a new beginning<sup>19</sup> — as if the notion 'The End of Art' would mean that there would be no new works of art anymore. This is clearly not what Danto and other theorists wanted to say.

### 3 Ruptures in Art History

As we have seen, under the heading of 'The End of Art', two problems have been addressed. Firstly, there is a lack of unity and coherence in the history of art, and therefore art history cannot provide for contemporary art a meaningful frame. As a consequence, secondly, there is a lack of identity within art itself; it is no longer clear what the word 'art' means. Does Gadamer sufficiently respond to these problems? In my view he does not, for several reasons that are interrelated with each other.

The first problem is that Gadamer shifts the discussion of the unity of art and art history to the general anthropological basis of the human experience of art. His conclusions, however, are also valid for other experiences, like doing scientific research, reading philosophy books, or watching an ice hockey game. Gadamer's analyses tell us, in a thorough

manner and in an intriguing style, a lot about human experience, but they do not tell us what it is in these experiences that makes us recognize art as art.

In addition, his approach is surprisingly a-historical: Gadamer searches in the historical developments of language supra-temporal characteristics of art, a universal anthropological basis. His effort to find support in the linguistic embedding of our thoughts, is not looking for the changes within language, which he knows very well and also refers to, but for their common features. A real historical approach will also have to deal with the breaks and ruptures within the history of art and the history of theory and philosophy of art. On the one hand, Gadamer seems to acknowledge these ruptures in art history, especially the revolutionary character of many modern art manifestations. On the other hand, he tries to use his historical analyses of language only to bridge this last rupture, thereby sketching a far too one-sided view of the history of art and its philosophy.

Finally, his effort to find in the Hegelian ideas of *Das sinnliche Schein* der Idee and the *Vergangenheitscharakter*, general characteristics of art that comprise traditional, modern and contemporary art, overstretches these terms, lending them too many and too contradictory meanings at the same time. Especially the radical autonomy and innovations of modern art can possibly be understood as being, in the end, in service of philosophical understanding, they cannot be taken to be undermined by philosophical understanding and therefore essentially belonging to the past. On the contrary, artistic reflections often lead beyond the rational reflections of philosophy, by playing with tensions and contradictions in a way that cannot be grasped with a linguistic elucidation. The views of, e.g., Schelling and Hölderlin on the relation between art and philosophy may be a good correction here to a Hegelian approach.

However Gadamer could inspire a better historical approach. More emphasis on the ruptures within the history of the terminology he uses, might be found, if we take a look at some characteristics of conceptual history. Gadamer has discussed these characteristics in another short article, called 'Begriffsgeschichte als Philosophie'.<sup>20</sup> In this text he states clearly that the history of philosophy should not be understood as an endless list of proposals and answers on the same eternal questions and problems. No, the questions themselves change and have a history. New political and cultural developments, as well as developments within language itself, ask for innovative reflections, with radically new answers, that have to be articulated in a new terminology,

perhaps even a new language. The historian of philosophy should, in Gadamer's view, be receptive and sensitive for the traces of the need for a new language. Philosophy often suffers a lack of the right words, the right idiom, it is in *Sprachnot*, as Gadamer says, 'in need of language', and it needs to invent new language, it needs *Sprachfindung*. The historian of philosophy has to look for the *Sprachnot* and *Sprachfindung* that past philosophers had to cope with.

What do we see if we try to take a look at the history of the concept 'art' with these ideas in our mind? Let us start at the eighteenth century. The expression fine arts or *schöne Künste* bears witness of the need to make a new distinction within the domain of arts or techniques, that at that time also included sciences and craftsmanship. The new sub-domain had a specific goal of its own: creating products that are only meant to be beautiful. Here we see the development of a new realm in culture and society, in which the beautiful arts find an independent existence of their own, no longer being mainly dependent on religious or political powers. The artist was supposed to be free, autonomous and a creative genius.

This new sphere of fine arts, beautiful arts, combines a whole new group of techniques. Whereas the medieval artes liberales included practices as divided as music, mathematics and rhetoric, the new domain consists of techniques that are no less diverse: architecture, painting, music, poetry, theatre, etc. This is clearly a case of *Sprachfindung*, the invention of a new word. This cultural and linguistic renewal finds its affirmation in the later shortage of fine arts to art. Now the fine arts, the techniques that are aiming at beauty, are no longer techniques among other techniques, but have conquered their own autonomous domain. Again, another step in *Sprachfindung*. From here on, the word 'art' remains the same, but its reference undergoes several changes.

Looking back at history, creations that are very diverse, like cave paintings, holy statues and temples could now be seen as part of this new domain of art. A relatively new field of historical research was invented: the history of art. As a consequence, the objects of art history were viewed from a relatively new perspective, as if they had always been 'art'.

Although autonomy and beauty were going together pretty well in the nineteenth century, they soon started to split, step by step, until the autonomy of the artist was so strong that it gave him the freedom to create whatever he wanted, beautiful or ugly – it was both possible, and it could both be called 'art'. This situation was reached in the course of the twentieth century.



From the eighteenth and nineteenth century on, the autonomy of the arts and of the artists was not something already established, it had to be achieved and realized. Therefore autonomy was from the start bound up with a teleological idea of progress, be it progress in art itself or progress in society. At least there were many currents within modern art that were striving for either a new, secular kind of religion or political autonomy in a future society. Many avant-garde forms of art testify of this aspect. Step by step they took more distance from conventions in culture and in the arts. Once the arts had left the norm of beauty as a necessity behind, it was this idea of progress, being ahead in the course of history, that gave the arts their identity that made works of art recognizable as art. This was a paradoxical identity: every time, and with accelerating speed, new forms of art were created, deliberately beyond artistic conventions, provoking comments that this was not art anymore. But exactly this moving of the borders of its own identity, trespassing demarcation lines all the time, exactly this gave the new arts their identity within a history of progress – until there were simply no boundaries left. This is what Hervé Fischer called an 'asthmatic chronology'.

Since the new autonomous art had nothing to serve but itself, it could freely develop, without any real boundaries being build into its own self-understanding. Therefore, it was inherent in the idea of the autonomy of art that everything and anything can be art, as long as it is declared by the artist, and/or accepted in the art world as a free autonomous artistic expression. It took Western culture about one and a half century to draw the final conclusions from this new understanding of partly old techniques and practices. In 1915, it was Marcel Duchamp whose Fountain, the first readymade in the history of art, showed for the first time this ultimate consequence. And then, surprisingly, if we look backwards to history, it still took many decades with many readymades, before it was clear to anyone that everything can be art and that the history of artistic progress has come to an end, in the sense that works of art can no longer derive their identity from this teleological history. 'The End of Art' thus means the end of this endless renewing and self-re-inventing that had become more or less a goal in itself.

#### 4 Conclusion

As a result, it is no longer at all clear, what the word 'art' means; but what else should we say if we want to speak of the meaning of a novel

of Philip Roth, the contours of a painting of Mark Rothko, or the policy of providing cultural subsidies by the local government of Rotterdam? Can we do without this meaningless word 'art'? In short, the art world is in *Sprachnot*. For some artists this is really a problem, others like to play with it, and again others are not interested at all. However, looking back to the early nineteenth century, we cannot but conclude that the meaning of the word 'art' has changed dramatically. We are in need of a new terminology, but it is not easy to invent it. In the meantime, the terminology of the arts still functions, like all institutions tend to survive themselves.

As you will understand, it is not the purpose of this article to solve this semantic problem. What I wanted to argue is that the radical developments in art, art history and in the history of ideas, can only be understood well, if we acknowledge breaks and ruptures that cannot be reconciled in one universal unity. Consequently, Gadamer's efforts to maintain the unity of art and art history, could not but fail. Radical changes and ruptures within history have to be accounted for. Gadamer even has given us the philosophical ideas and even terminology to do so, although he himself preferred to look for unity and continuity instead of radical ruptures and differences. Within the hermeneutical horizon, however, not only coherence and unity is to be found, but also loss of meaning, radical change and irreconcilable differences. It is also the task of philosophy, therefore, to find differences in the common – *Es ist auch die Aufgabe der Philosophie, das Differente unter dem Gemeinsamen zu finden.*

#### Noten

- 1 Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Die Aktualität des Schönen. Kunst als Spiel, Symbol und Fest', *Gesammelte Werke* 8 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 103.
- 2 Hervé Fischer, *L'histoire de l'art est terminée* (Paris: Balland, 1981). Cf. [www.hervefischer.com](http://www.hervefischer.com).
- 3 Arthur Danto, 'The End of Art', in Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 81-115; idem, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- 4 Hans Belting, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte?* (München, Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1983), transl. *The End of the History of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); idem, *Das Ende der Kunstgeschichte. Eine Position nach zehn Jahren* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997).

- 5 Eva Geulen, *Das Ende der Kunst. Lesarten eines Gerichts nach Hegel* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002); trans. *The End of Art: Readings in a Rumour after Hegel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).
- 6 Gadamer has given the lectures that formed the basis of this publication even earlier, in 1974 at the Salzburger Hochschulwochen, with the title 'Kunst als Spiel, Symbol und Fest'. This first version was published in *Kunst heute. Salzburger Hochschulwochen 1974*, ed. Ansgar Paus (Graz, Wien, Köln: Styria, 1975), 25-84.
- 7 Gadamer, 'Die Aktualität des Schönen', 94-100.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 100.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 103.
- 10 *Ibid.*: 'Wir dürfen nie unterschätzen, was ein Wort uns sagen kann. Das Wort ist ja die Vorleistung des Denkens, die vor uns vollbracht worden ist.'
- 11 *Ibid.*, 103-112.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 113.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 136-142.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 142: 'Im Werk der Kunst wird das, was noch nicht in der geschlossenen Kohärenz eines Gebildes, sondern in Vorüberfluten da ist, in ein bleibendes, dauerndes Gebilde verwandelt, so dass in es hineinwachsen zugleich auch heisst: über uns hinauszuwachsen. Dass 'in der zaudernden Weile einiges Haltbare sei' – das ist Kunst heute, Kunst gestern und von jeher.'
- 15 Gadamer, *Ende der Kunst? Von Hegels Lehre vom Vergangenheitscharakter der Kunst bis zur Anti-Kunst von heute*, Gesammelte Werke 8 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 206-220.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 206.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 207: "dessen Ende nicht abzusehen ist."
- 18 *Ibid.*, 208.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 220.
- 20 Gadamer, *Begriffsgeschichte als Philosophie*, Gesammelte Werke 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 77-91.

## 14 Faith as Fusion of Horizons?<sup>1</sup>

MATHIEU SCRAIRE

When students of religion read *Truth and Method* in search of what insight Gadamer's hermeneutics might bring on their object of study, the concept of *belongingness* (*Zugehörigkeit*) is most likely to spark their interest, although its relevance for this task might not be immediately evident. So, although there certainly are quite a few other legitimate methods of enquiry that could prove helpful – for instance, empirically investigating what sort of conversations theologians have had with Gadamer in the previous fifty years, discussing an influential book on the subject, such as Philippe Eberhard's *The Middle Voice In Gadamer's Hermeneutics* (to which I owe much)<sup>2</sup>, or researching the many religious themes in Gadamer's thought – the thread of this chapter will be Gadamer's master concept, which I already have tackled elsewhere<sup>3</sup> and which I think can provide some very needed conceptual tools in a discussion about hermeneutics and theology. The general aim is to shed some light upon the meaning of the 'ontological turn' within hermeneutics for modern Christian theology.

I will therefore focus here on *Zugehörigkeit* (which can certainly be read as the basis of the 'ontological turn'), and its possible application to a specific passage of Scripture. The main argument is that *Zugehörigkeit* translates quite effectively John 18:37, which read: 'Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice'.<sup>4</sup> I will try and show that this passage bears an *exact correspondence* to the key elements that come to the fore in *Zugehörigkeit* and so might make for a fresh take on *faith*, even if (or perhaps because) this passage bears no explicit reference to faith itself. Belongingness may help us uncover this reference from an original point of view. I contend that, simply put, *faith can be read as belongingness to Christ, in the exact sense in which Gadamer describes his concept*. And since I am no theologian myself, I will hereby recall Augustine's interpretation of the passage as a link to my presentation of *Zugehörigkeit*. Of course it is well known that Augustine is no stranger to Gadamer's horizon of thought.<sup>5</sup>